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**The Soviet Offensive in Afghanistan
Talking Points for the D/DCI**

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The Soviets almost certainly launched the present offensive to regain the initiative from the Afghan resistance. Their main goals are to inflict a major defeat on the Panjsher Valley guerrillas and capture their leader, Ahmad Shah Masood:

- A victory over Masood would cripple one of the most effective insurgent groups and deal a blow to the morale of the resistance throughout Afghanistan.
- It would also deny the insurgents a strategic area of Afghanistan that overlooks the main highway from the USSR to Kabul and is a major infiltration route from Pakistan.
- The Soviets may also hope to destroy the civilian base of support for the Panjsher insurgents by high-level bombing of crops and villages.

The Soviets' largest campaign of the war--involving some 20,000 troops, mostly Soviet--so far has failed to achieve their goals:

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Fragmentary evidence suggests that the Soviets believe their casualties have been high, considering the low level of fighting:

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- We estimate that insurgent losses range from 300 to 500 killed and wounded.
- Afghan civilians suffered higher casualties than the insurgents.

Soviet tactics in the present campaign have been largely unsuccessful:

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The Panjsher insurgents have not suffered serious losses in the Soviet campaign, and appear likely to emerge with a significant moral victory leaving them as strong as ever:

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-- The insurgents generally have avoided fighting except where they have the advantage of terrain.

The Soviets have been frustrated by their inability to locate and capture or kill Masood:

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The Soviets are establishing new bases and improving their defensive positions in the Panjsher Valley, indicating that they are preparing to leave a sizable force when the present offensive ends:

- They presumably hope to prevent Masood's forces from using the valley as a staging base.
- The Soviets will be able to control the valley floor, but will be vulnerable to costly harassing attacks.
- The insurgents will be able to continue attacking Soviet supply lines outside the Panjsher Valley by using their bases in the surrounding mountains and adjacent valleys.

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Failure to achieve major gains could cause Moscow to revise its strategy and tactics:

- The Soviets could decide to emphasize more mobile small unit tactics--as they did earlier in the war without great success.

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- Moscow still appears reluctant to send major troop reinforcements to Afghanistan.

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